

# living green

# ENERGY CONSERVATION TIPS



The Department of Environmental Quality and its employees would like to share these conservation tips that will help you save money and protect the environment. Protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility and we should all chip in to do our part. By working together, we can make a difference.

## BE THE SOLUTION

## TAKE SOLAR POWER WITH YOU

Many of us have experienced the frustration of having a cell phone or MP3 player go dead and being away from a power outlet to charge the batteries. Many others would simply like to reduce their dependence on the electricity grid. Thanks to technology improvements and lower production costs for photovoltaic (PV) cells, you can now harness sunlight at home or on the road to power a variety of products while reducing your environmental impact.

PV cells generate varying amounts of electricity based on their size and composition, and on the amount of incoming sunlight. Here are just a few examples of products for which sunlight provides a viable and affordable alternative power source:

- **Chargers.** Nearly any electronic gadget that is plugged into an electrical outlet to charge (such as cell phones, digital cameras, MP3 players, or laptops) can use a solar-powered charger instead. Some solar chargers are designed for stationary use while others are incorporated into backpacks or other portable totes so you can charge a device while you carry it around. These products can vary widely in their wattage outputs and subsequent charge times (a cell phone can take 2 to 14 hours to charge, depending on the product).

- **Lighting.** Walkway lights are the most commonly known solar-powered light fixtures, but floodlights, outdoor task lights (such as grill lights), and even holiday lights can be charged with solar panels during the day. On average, a sunny day can provide 8 to 12 hours' worth of power. Some solar light fixtures feature timers or motion sensors as well.

- **Toys.** Solar-powered toy cars, planes, boats, and robots are not only fun for kids but also teach them about renewable energy. You can also green up battery-operated toys by using rechargeable batteries instead of alkaline, and charging them with a solar-powered battery charger.

[Note: Bug zappers are available in solar-powered versions as well, but like their plug-in counterparts, they are not recommended because they indiscriminately kill insects, including those beneficial for biodiversity.]

Solar-powered products are available in garden centers, toy stores, camping and hiking stores, and from online retailers that promote environmentally friendly products, such as Real Goods. Because solar products vary in their power output, review their specifications before purchasing to ensure they are the best fit for your needs and, in the case of chargers, are compatible with the devices they will be charging.

**Tips provided by: Union of Concerned Scientists and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality staff.**

